

FINAL REPORT

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Civil Society and Governance in Libya - Resource and Learning Centers

AID-OAA-G-11-00055



Submitted by Mercy Corps
To USAID/Office of Transition Initiatives

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Grant No. AID-OAA-G-11-00055 Civil Society and Governance in Libya

Implementation Dates: 23 September 2011 – 31 May 2012

Final Report Date: August 31, 2012

I. Results Summary: Description of the cumulative results achieved according to the outputs described in Attachment B (Program Description)

- Preliminary Steering Committee of Mercy Corps and the Office of Culture and Civil Society is established. This was not achieved during the project timeframe. An effort was made to establish a steering committee in November but the initial three months of the project, during which there was an expat program manager budgeted, were focused primarily on procurement and set-up of the center and on organizing and delivering training. In early January Mercy Corps sought to meet with the Office of Culture and Civil Society (OCCS) in Benghazi, however there were internal issues at the OCCS that prevented this from happening. (Please see our January report for more details.) After that, the OCCS decided to establish its own Center. In June, Mercy Corps met with the OCCS about establishing a Steering Committee. They expressed a willingness to take part in the Steering Committee but not if local civil society representatives were also on the committee. (See Section IV below for further comment on this.)
- RLC in Benghazi is open and equipped for use for 3 months. This output has been achieved. The RLC opened on October 5th, 2011 and has continued since then, over 10 months. (See Section IV below for further comment on this.)
- All CSOs, individuals and informal organizations in Benghazi are able to access the center for learning, networking and internet access. This output has been achieved. The Hamzat Wasl Civil Society Resource Center has been spectacularly successful. This OTI project established a successful community institution accessed by 59 local and 20 international NGOs, where 68 trainings that covered a wide range of topics were conducted including: organizational capacity development, good governance, media strategies and CV preparation.
- At least 60 CSOs, groups and individuals in Benghazi receive training on defining and developing a mission, proposal development, and advocacy. This output was achieved and the target of 60 was surpassed. The following are just a few examples of trainings conducted by other organizations:
 - Tadthamin, a Libyan NGO focused on raising awareness on human rights, brought experts from Geneva for training on human rights in the Libyan context that focused on group learning, brainstorming, and dialogue as teaching tools.
 - The National Democratic Institute used the Resource Center to conduct training on advocacy for leaders from the Tebu tribe, a minority ethnic group from southern Libya, to help formulate policy ideas.
 - NDI also used the center to host training on defining objectives and setting goals for a local NGO, the Committee for Women.

Mercy Corps organized several trainings to support this output. Immediately upon opening the center, Mercy Corps contracted the Center for Development Services (CDS), a Cairo-based social enterprise, to conduct two trainings on strategic objectives for Libyan civil society organizations and activists that were conducted. The LNGO Coalition and the Union of NGOs



were invited to submit candidates from member organizations. The training lasted 3 days, 60 people attended and it covered strategic thinking and planning, with an end result of small-groups defining an organizational strategy, providing the participants with tools that they can share with their own organizations.

Mercy Corps Training on Strategic Communication and Media

These innovative trainings were conducted in partnership with USAID OTI, and combined technical training on specific photographic and film equipment, as well as editing and production software, with thematic workshops on themes. The first training was built around the theme of reconciliation, and a local expert was brought in to lead a module on reconciliation and what it means for post-Qaddafi Libya. The second training centered on the theme of professional women in Libya, and the modules were led by a selection of women from different public and private sectors in Benghazi. Both trainings included modules on strategic communication provided by Mercy Corps Project Manager John Helfers and Alexis Everington, a freelance expert. At total of 22 people attended the training over nine days.

Mercy Corps Training on Project Design

Ahmad Farouk from CDS conducted the training on project design for local organizations to orient them on the need for learning the process of designing a program, rather than simply undertaking a project based on members' interest or knowledge. The training lasted for three days and 60 people attended from different organizations. This training was about process, and walking through the logical steps of design.

From March 22nd to April 30th, the Hamzat Wasl team organized six leadership training packages – leadership packages consist of six separate workshops each – and one strategic planning training session for 48 local NGOs in Benghazi. A total of 37 training sessions were given in three weeks by Mercy Corps' Civil Society Program Manager. The training package consists of six sessions including leadership; communication skills; advocacy; team building; proposal writing; monitoring and evaluation; and time management. The aim of the training was to give members of NGOs the capacity to lead their organizations, work as a group, network and build relationships with like-minded NGOs, plan projects, and also advocate for issues in their communities.

- At least 60 CSOs, groups and individuals receive assistance with NGO registration. This indicator was successfully achieved. The registration process requires that instead of only providing a name and contact number, NGOs have to demonstrate a deeper organizational

capacity, notably through presenting a charter or constitution. NGOs will have to submit much more detailed information to successfully register. Trainings at the Hamzat Wasl Resource Center played a key role in assisting local NGOs to think strategically and strengthen their internal frameworks, develop strategic plans and mission statements, helping them to fulfill the requirements necessary for formal registration with the Ministry of Culture and Civil Society.

II. Impact: An assessment of the impact of the program, including a summary of lessons learned, and any particularly important success stories.

Areas of Success

The physical space

By consulting members of civil society in the design process as well as the set-up of the physical space for the center, Mercy Corps was able to make the space hospitable and conducive to project objectives.

The center is located in downtown Benghazi, near a parking lot for easy access. It is also conveniently located near shops. The space was chosen partially because of its open feeling—there are few dividing walls to act as barriers between people. This is intended to heighten a feeling of openness and promote collaboration. The open space also serves as a safeguard against suspicion that might have been directed towards mixed-gender activities. In order to promote equal access to the center, a building with an elevator was chosen, and the elevator accesses both floors. Cultural considerations were also observed with the designation of a prayer space.



Activities

The space itself is one of the central features of the Center. Having tables and chairs that people can use for meetings fulfills one of the key objectives of the center—giving civil society a place to work and meet. When the center was started most local organizations did not have office space, and were



meeting out of homes or businesses. For the latter, when businesses re-opened, this made it very difficult to continue using them for other purposes. Hamzat Wasl serves as a place where organizations can hold internal meetings as well as meet with others. Some groups, such as the youth group Bokra, have even formed in Hamzat Wasl, where they used the meeting space to establish the foundations of their organizations. This is particularly true for youth organizations, who often lack access to a meeting space. Youth

have used the space to hold internal meetings and convene forums.

Opening the space for other organizations has proven to be an effective policy at keeping the center relevant and well-used. Mercy Corps made it clear from the beginning that the space was available for other international organizations to use for trainings or workshops if they wished. Mercy Corps also communicated with civil society members that they were welcome to use the space for trainings or workshops if they were related to civil society and not overtly political. Trainings and workshops serve as

a draw to the center, which encourages networking and collaboration between center-users. This has given the center its unique energy.

The center has also made resources available, both in print and online . Through donations from NDI as well as resources from Mercy Corps, the center boasts a small print library that users are welcome to use while at the center. There are also computers available that are connected to the internet, which allows users to access the broad range of information online.

Another success factor has been Hamzat Wasl's website, which enables the center to reach out to users. The center has begun using the site to announce events and accept registration. A calendar on the site shows planned and past events. The site is operational and has traffic.

The center also has a jobs board where organizations can post vacancies. This board is simultaneously used to announce events, trainings, and other activities of interest around Benghazi related to civil society.

The impact of Hamzat Wasl's success in supporting civil society may be seen by the proliferation of community resource centers. The Ministry of Culture and Civil Society, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the French NGO ACTED have opened or are in the process of establishing their own civil society resource centers in Benghazi.

Convening Power

As a result of the success factors mentioned above, USAID funds have successfully been leveraged by Mercy Corps to give Hamzat Wasl a significant ability to convene relevant actors in civil society, media, government and academia to address important issues in the form of occasional round -table discussions and, starting in February, weekly Community Forums. One such event, on a visit by UN Ambassador Susan Rice, was a roundtable discussion with leading women activists in Benghazi about the role of women in the transition to democracy. Another roundtable was organized with youth leaders for representatives of other donor agencies.



Ambassador Rice, Ambassador Cretz, Samantha Powers at Hamzat Wasl

Supporting the Elections

The Center was an important contributor to the improved capacity of civil society to support the electoral process. A number of workshops were held about the electoral process, the role of women, and the constitution. Individuals and organizations used the center to network and to organize. In January and February, a coalition of 4 organizations used the center to organize a petition drive to advocate to the local council to hold an election to decide the Benghazi local council. The drive was a success and the election was held in Benghazi in April.

III. A summary of progress made in achieving indicator targets from M&E plan

The Hamzat Wasl project achieved all targets. See summary table below.

Indicator Tracking Table

Indicator	Achieved Oct 11- May 12
Objective 1: Increased capacity of national, regional, and local NGOs to foster sustained civic participation in their communities	
# NGOs have clearly defined mission and development plans designed.	5
% of participating NGOs reporting increased confidence and ability to lead civic engagement activities	100%
Objective 2: Libyan CSOs participate in capacity building through trainings and workshops	
# of introductory civil society workshops held.	36
% of NGOs reporting an increased understanding of mission development, proposal development, advocacy, messaging, fundraising, and M&E.	100%
Other:	
# of local NGOs using HW	59
# of international NGOs using HW	20
# of training sessions conducted at HW through I/NGOs	68
# of meetings taking place at HW through I/NGOs	94
# of beneficiaries benefiting from HW through HW team	340
# of activities conducted to link civil societies and governmental institutions	6
# of visitors acquiring information through HW	3000
# of local and INGO registering on the data base directory on the website	15
# of job opportunities posted on the website and in HW	30
# of visitors to HW website	17,750
# of members on the HW Facebook page	520

IV. Important findings, comments and recommendations

The original grant end date of March 22nd was extended to May 31st to allow for the continuation of training activities. Financing the project beyond the grant end date was possible thanks to a small grant provided by the UK Foreign Commonwealth Office, but beyond August 2012 no additional funding was secured. Mercy Corps approached a number of traditional and non-traditional donors, many of whom were keenly interested in the project and requested full-length proposals. In the end, none of them were able or willing to provide funding for the continuation of the project. Part of the reasoning may have been an unwillingness to duplicate activities; in September of 2011 the EC announced that it was to be the leading donor agency for all civil society programming, and that they had funded ACTED to establish civil society resource centers in Benghazi, Tripoli and other locations. The ACTED centers finally opened in June 2012 in Benghazi and Tripoli, but for the 9 months leading up to the opening, other donors were aware that the funding had been allocated for it, and they were unwilling to support Hamzat Wasl's ongoing activities which were seen as duplicative of the EC's grant to ACTED.

Also in 2012, the Ministry of Culture and Civil Society's "Center for the Support of Civil Society" was to be started. Mercy Corps approached them to take an active part in forming a board or steering committee for Hamzat Wasl along with Mercy Corps and local NGO umbrella groups like the Union of NGOs and the Coalition of NGOs. They expressed a strong interest in taking part in Hamzat Wasl, and taking over the funding of it, but they were not able to get the final approval from the Ministry. Also they did not want local NGOs on the board for fear of showing favoritism toward those organizations. In the end, the Ministry's center moved forward with its own separate civil society resource center.

Mercy Corps met with the leaders of the NGO networks in Benghazi who expressed a very strong interest to keep the center going, but they were not able to come up with funding for rent (approximately \$3,850/month). Some representatives even stated that they wanted to manage the Center but not with funding from the Ministry – even though they themselves could not come up with any alternative funding ideas.

With the opening of the EC-funded resource center in Benghazi, the imminent opening of another resource center by the Ministry of Culture and Civil Society, and yet a third center soon to be opened up by the Ministry of Social Affairs, the requirements of local civil society to find suitable space for training, organizing and networking might possibly be met. Due to the unavailability of funding to keep Hamzat Wasl open, Mercy Corps is unable to continue the operation of the Center. At the time of writing, the Hamzat Wasl Civil Society Resource Center will have to close its doors temporarily, but discussion is currently underway with ACTED to relocate their center to Hamzat Wasl, which, due to its better location, the ambience of the space, and the history of the place is preferred by many local NGOs. Mercy Corps has proposed to ACTED that there be a steering committee with local civil society representation, and support given for the transfer of management of the center to local NGOs by the end of 2013. It is recommended that the OTI's Libyan Transition Initiative maintain contact with the center to engage with local NGOs there for continued support.

The success of the OTI project was to engage and coalesce civil society energies in Benghazi, provide high-quality training on organizational development as well as on topical issues related to governance, human rights, media, and other topics; to provide a space for networking and coalition-building; and to provide a symbol of the new Libya where a free and vibrant civil society can openly meet and claim space in the political culture of Benghazi. If the Hamzat Wasl Center comes to an end, the impact of the OTI project still remains. The OTI project was successful at catalyzing the energy of civil society at a crucial moment in the history of post-revolution Benghazi and has had a strong impact on the formation of stronger NGOs and networks with deeper understandings and more mature approaches to the nature of democratic governance.